

June 9, 1999

**SCHAKOWSKY, FRESHMAN DEMOCRATS CALL ON SPEAKER HASTERT TO BRING SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION, MODERNIZATION BILLS TO THE FLOOR**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today joined with Freshman Democratic members to ask that Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) bring school construction and modernization legislation to the floor for debate.

Schakowsky said, "The conditions in many schools throughout our nation are shameful. How can we expect to deliver the best quality education to our students when they are learning about gravity from falling ceiling tiles. Investing in our schools is nothing short of a national priority and I urge the Speaker to join in our efforts to bring meaningful legislation to the floor."

According to the latest data, one third of the nation's schools need extensive repair, the backlog of unmet school infrastructure needs across the country totals \$112 billion, and 60% of schools have at least one major building feature in disrepair. Furthermore, school districts are in need of federal assistance for new construction to relieve overcrowding. The projections for school enrollment in the 2008-2009 school year is 54.3 million, up from 52.7 million in the 1998-1999 school year.

In a letter to the Speaker, Schakowsky and her Democratic Freshman colleagues wrote, "Our nation is facing a crisis in regards to school infrastructure. We must address this crisis in the House of Representatives by passing legislation to assist with school construction and modernization."

They added, "We repair bridges and highways to keep them safe for public use. It is now time to repair our schools and make them safe for our children."

The Chicago Public Schools have invested \$2 billion to modernize and improve the infrastructure of many schools, yet they are still \$1.5 billion short of completing all the projects identified as fundamental needs.

Democrats are supporting an initiative to provide \$25 billion in assistance to build and renovate public schools. This will enable states and school districts to modernize and renovate 6,000 local public schools to improve learning conditions, end overcrowding and make smaller classes possible.